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ABSTRACT

Designed to give students and adults an opportunity to put their ideas on videotape, this component of the Special Arts Project has as specific goals stimulating student/adult creativity, learning how different people can work together to make a successful program, and making video available to the community as a form of documentation and self-expression. This booklet outlines in detail six video class sessions: a general introduction covering the four basic parts of the video system and perparation of short skits--parodies of commercials, short interviews of news shows, and singing or dancing; short pieces developed by several groups of learners; additional work on short skits; construction of longer projects--documentary, poetry, theatre and video technology, and community video; activities needed to complete final projects; and the final shooting of projects and audience reactions. (JM)

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VIDEO FOR YOU

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Special Arts Project of
Missouri State Council on the Arts

CS501 184

VIDEO FOR YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Preface

All students know about TV. For better or for worse, they are immersed in the television environment with its cops, space monsters, commercials, talk shows, and sports heroes. The statement that students spend more time watching TV than they do in school (some 15,000 hours by age 18) has been repeated so often that it has become a cliché.

Television is such a part of our daily lives that most of us (adults as well as children) accept it uncritically. We often cannot imagine it to be different from what it is in reality. Allan King explains its elusive deception: "The video image looks real, but it is not real, except as video. Video is real, but no, that is not really you or me inside the television; it is an electronic reproduction of us, our sounds and our spaces. I've moved away from wanting to break open the TV set to let the cowboys and Indians out, but the immediacy and the presence of the video image remains."[1]

TV often encourages us to be passive: to sit back and to watch people who are supposed to have a greater share of beauty, intelligence and personality than we. In a subtle, often unnoticed way, this aspect of the "boob tube" can be damaging to one's self image.

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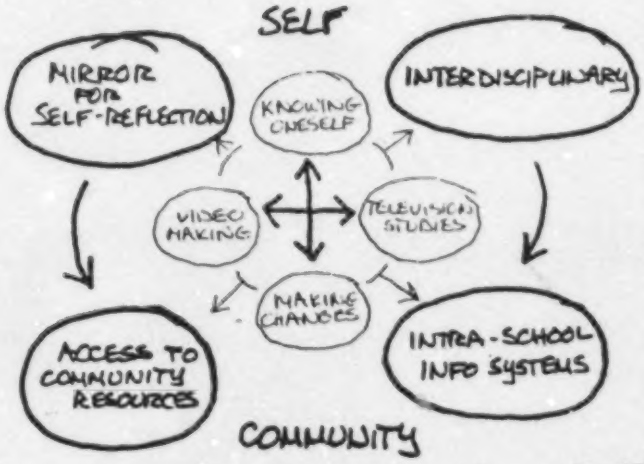
1 Quoted from brochure of Center for Music Drama and Art, Lake Placid, N.Y.



Video in the classroom is a way to expose both children and adults to the processes behind the screen. If they are given opportunities to participate in the production of a TV program through videotaping, they find that it is not magic but, on the contrary, that they too have the skills, creative ideas, organizational ability, team-work, a sense of purpose, and a sense of humor.

Because television is one of the dominant communication tools of our age, video helps persons to learn evaluation skills which they may apply to home television watching. It enables them to develop and to organize concepts in a medium which is, in many ways, more familiar to them than print. Thus learning the basics of production in video is a valuable form of literacy. People learn to think and become productive in an interest area that does not have to be sold to them.

Perhaps the best reason to teach video to students and/or adults is that it engages their interest and directs their concentration to the subject matter. Contrary to popular belief, the equipment is simple to use and therefore no adult or student need be afraid of it. Videotape equipment has far fewer buttons and controls than, for instance, a typewriter. The simple video systems are more than adequate for classroom work. Learners will not necessarily produce slick programs comparable to the national networks, but they can learn the basic skills for communication.

In the video component of the Special Arts Project of the Missouri State Council on the Arts (made possible through a grant under the Emergency School Aid Act), two video artists worked with each class six times for a period of a hour and a half. The project was designed to give students and adults and opportunity to put their ideas on videotape. Special goals were:

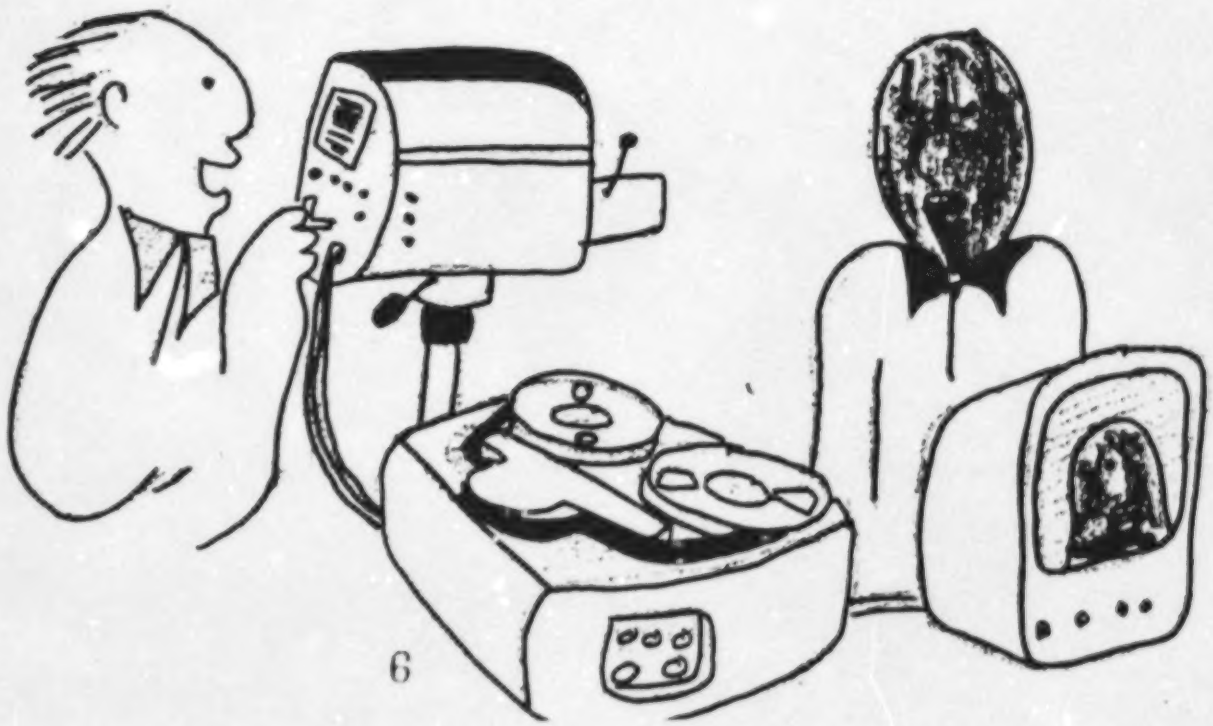
1) to stimulate student/adult creativity
2) to learn how different people can work together, each with specific contributions, to make a successful program.
3) to make video available to the community as a form of documentation and self-expression.

Specific instruction was given over a period of six class sessions to the children; two sessions per semester were given to adults. Instruction time can be longer or shorter, depending upon the maturity and ingenuity of the students/adults. With younger students, K-3, time segments are shortened.

Probably the optimum use of video in the classroom and community will come when it is no longer thought of as a special course, but rather as another communication method to be used whenever video programming would facilitate creativity, learning and/or dissemination of truth.

CLASS SESSIONS

1) GENERAL INTRODUCTION: consists of basic video experience of learners themselves acting for television camera. They respond invariably by giggling, pointing, waving their hands in front of the camera, hiding their faces in their hands and peeping out, or something similar. (Incidentally, adults also act nervouse when they initially perform for the video camera.) It is wise to allow them this initial experience in a free-form session so that they understand that it is permissible to act spontaneously, even unusually, in front of the camera. Simple actions in which everyone can participate, i.e., passing the microphone and letting each person announce his name, are best. If a portable camera is available, the children/adults pass it around so that everyone is photographing a neighbor when he/she speaks. Variations involve asking a question in which each person can answer in his/her own style: "What's your favorite word and why?" After these brief encounters with the camera, the tape is re-played while everyone watches self or friends.



The four basic parts of the video system are explained:

A. CAMERA which picks up the light of the picture through its lens and turns it into an electronic signal traveling along a cable.

B. MICROPHONE which picks up the sound and turns it into an electronic signal traveling along a cable.

C. VIDEOTAPE RECORDER (VTR) which magnetically records on tape the signals from both camera and microphone. Function of this piece of equipment is re-play of what camera and microphone have recorded.

D. MONITOR (TV SET) converts electronic signal back into picture and sound. It can accept signals either directly from camera and microphone (live) or from VTR (taped).

In the final part of the first lesson, students/adults are asked to prepare ideas for short skits which will be photographed in next class, i.e., parodies of commercials, short interviews or news shows, singing or dancing. If time permits, skits are improvised during first lesson.

COMMERCIAL

These preparatory activities are stressed:

1) Think of a product.
2) Give it a good personality.
3) Name it.
4) Storyboard a one-minute commercial for this product accenting its personality.

Advise learners to watch for the three above-mentioned functions on their home TV sets. Attached is a sample storyboard from one of the local stations.

INB

:30-SECONDS

SAMPLE STORYBOARD

EW FROM BACK SEAT OF COUPLE
FRONT SEAT OF CONVERTIBLE WITH
EREO TAPE PLAYER AS FOCAL POINT

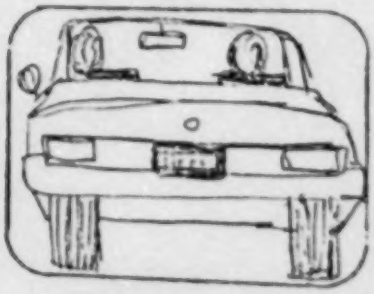
(SOUND OF MUSIC) —

HE: Driving sure is a lot nicer now that we have a car with a stereo tape system.

SHE: The miles just seem to fly by

HORN

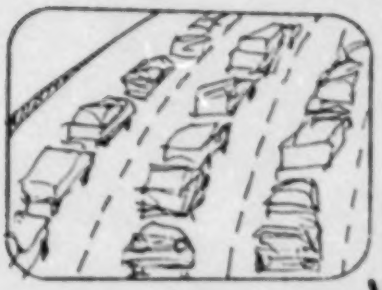
T TO REAR VIEW OF CAR



(MUSIC FADES DOWN AND OUT)

MUSIC OUT

T BACK TO SHOW CAR IN
RRIBLE TRAFFIC JAM



ANNCR: An auto loan from National Bank could save you enough money to buy a stereo

FADE HORN

NGER SHOT OF TRAFFIC JAM

tape system for your new car -- because at — there's no dealer markup.

IDE OF STEREO TAPES WITH
VALUE"

And, for a limited time, you get ~~two~~ a free stereo tapes with your auto loan, at INB, ~~the~~ call before you buy.

~~bank in the parlor~~

cartridge

T TO LOGO
ALL BEFORE YOU BUY."

NEWS PROGRAM

Discussion about the following topics is necessary:

1) types of news--national, local, sports, weather, editorial, etc.

2) what amount of time is given to each type.

3) who are the sponsors and whether a newscaster introduces them.

4) types of visual aids used.

5) selection of announcer who tells the news in front of camera.

6) reporter/s behind the news.

7) technicians (people who run camera and sound equipment).

8) editorial writer.

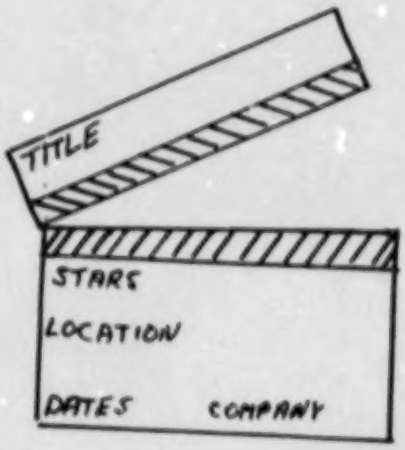
9) director who makes sure everyone is doing his job.

2) SHORT PIECES etc. are developed by several groups of learners. While each group performs before the camera, other learners work alternately at production jobs:

CAMERAMAN: operates the camera while learning how to frame the picture, to focus, and to zoom in and out.

SOUNDMAN: holds the microphone as close as possible to talent but is careful to remain out of focus of camera. If the skit is an interview, news report, or something in which the person himself in the scene holds the microphone, no soundman is needed.

DIRECTOR: coordinates the action. The director helps to decide who should be where and when. The director can begin each shot with the questions:



"Actors ready?"

"Camera ready?"

"Sound ready?"

Then he gives the commands:

"Quiet on the set."

"Roll the tape - ACTION!"

TIPS ON CAMERA AND MICROPHONE WORK:

Instruct the camera people:

1) to zoom in and out slowly.
2) to make camera motions slowly and steadily.
3) to zoom in all the way on the subject for best focusing; focus; then zoom out to shoot desired picture.

Instruct the microphone people:

1) to point the mike at whoever is speaking.
2) to hold mike six to twelve inches away from speaker's mouth.

After two or three skits are completed, they are re-played. The learners critique their work with specific ideas for improvement. If there is time, it is wise to re-take some scenes so that the students can see the improvement which results from more careful planning or change in the content.

3) MORE WORK ON SHORT SKITS. Explanation of long, medium, and close-up camera shots. Concentration on use of angle and zooming for special effects. Discussion of which shots are best to use for different scenes: when do we use a close-up? When is a long shot best? Students usually can answer from examples they watch on TV.

It is important to teach students to think in terms of staging their scenes for the camera. At first, they tend to stand in front of the camera and to act their scenes without the camera in mind. A student's back is turned so that the camera cannot catch the face; students often stand so far apart that the camera cannot keep both of them in the frame. Students learn that there is a difference between what looks right in a room and what looks right on the TV screen.

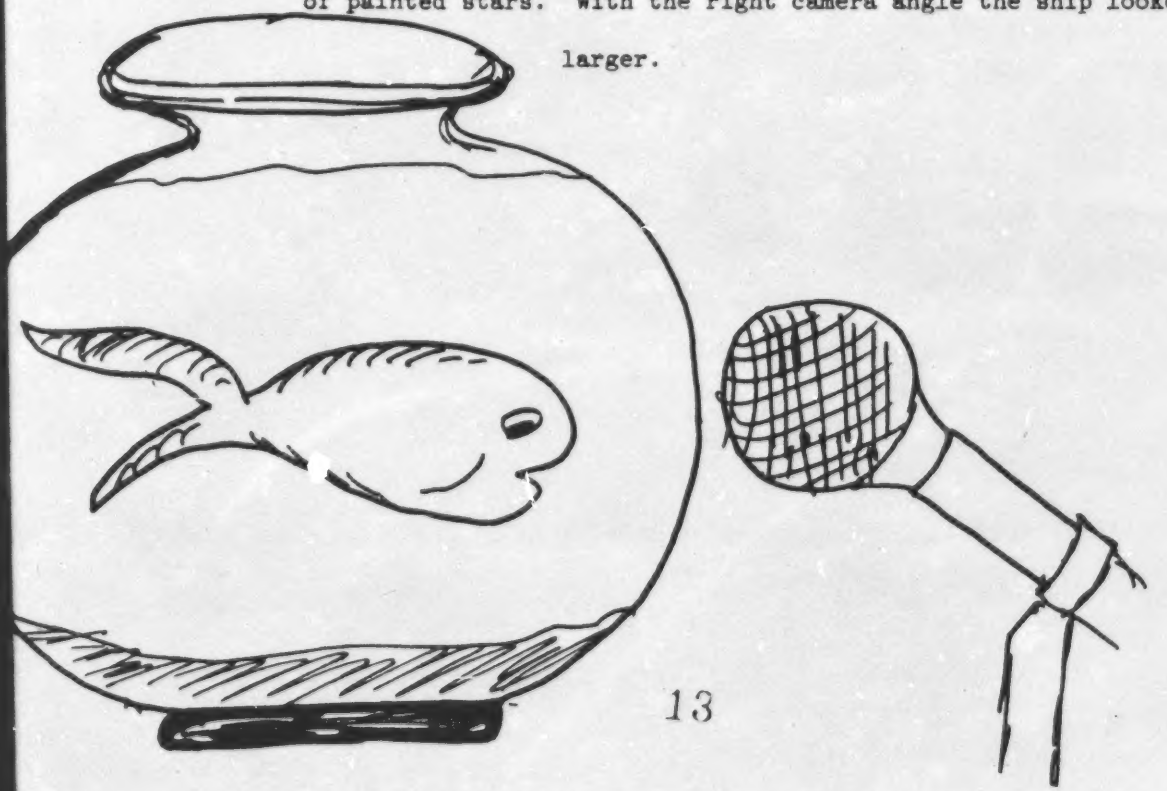
Another function of video training is to learn how the camera and microphone create illusions. In most classroom situations, equipment for elaborate special effects is not available. However, far more important than equipment is a creative imagination. Sound effects are often the easiest to perform and enjoyable for the students. The following are examples of students creativity in both sound and visual effects:

--an interview with a goldfish. The camera shot a close-up of the fish in the tank while two boys, one the interviewer and the other the fish (supposedly), talked off camera.

--blowing bubbles in a glass of water for the effect of being in a submarine.

--a horror movie record and a plastic bat dangling in front of the camera for a vampire scene.

--a plastic model of a spaceship moving slowly in front of a poster of painted stars. With the right camera angle the ship looked much larger.



4) CONSTRUCTION OF LONGER PROJECTS. These may encompass several genres.

A. DOCUMENTARY: having or claiming the objective quality, authority, or force of documentation in the representation of a scene, place or condition of life or of a social or political problem or cause.

Is the documentary real or created? Learners explore the range of documentary from simple reporting (interviewing shoppers in the parking lot of a supermarket across from the school) to the documentary as a collage of found materials.

B. POETRY: exploring the relationship of words/spoken/ written to the VIDEO medium.

Here are created video tapes from poems or fairly short pieces of writing. Learners meet and read/discuss their writing. Together they select one poem/piece on which they work as a group. Next step: evolve a "video script" and tape it. Emphasis is on original poetry from participants but this does not exclude the possibility of working with "outside" material. Participants tape poems interpreted through dance, sung poems, and poems read to collage-type image mixing. On the spot writing that deals directly with video as a medium through which it is happening is especially encouraged. And so are live video poetry events given in special video environments. This is the point of contact with other learners in the class.

C. VIDEO: Theatre/Event/Environment

. . . an experiment for learners interested in combining theatre consciousness of role-playing and video technology to produce a series of video performances which attempt to integrate the three dimensional space of a performance area with the two dimensional space of the video image.

D. COMMUNITY VIDEO. Members are given instruction and experience with hands-on approach to cameras, decks, and all the other gear designed for those who are interested in video but cannot afford the time to work intensely on a "film" of their own. So they learn the basics while working together on a group tape. Everyone is encouraged to bring his/her particular talent to bear on the tape so any one involved with acting, music, photography, whatever, puts his/her talent to use. For those excited by the idea of working outside, excursions on to the streets with porta-pak are encouraged along with suggestions and assistance for "interviewing."

Thus ideas for longer projects range from plays, to variety or "Johnny Carson"-type shows, to news shows, to reports constructed outside the school. Each group decides duties required to produce the tape: writing scripts, collecting props and music, designing title cards, deciding who will be the actors and who the technicians. These activities should be structured so that <u>each</u> person makes a personal contribution to the final tape.

5. ACTIVITIES NEEDED TO COMPLETE FINAL PROJECTS.

Scenes should be re-shot if certain facets did not work smoothly. The learners themselves usually recognize such inadequacies and desire to retake the scene. Retakes can be frustrating, but they are an essential part of TV. When the scene is finally "right," the group feels a real sense of accomplishment. It generally happens that while working on these last tapes that the learners become aware of the fact that TV requires more pre-planning and team work than just "hamming" in front of the camera.

A play or story can be divided into sequences. After each sequence, the tape can be stopped while another group readies things for the next sequence. However, on the final tape, sequences follow one another. Division of story into sequences allows, also, for more sophisticated camera movement or changes of focus in story.

6. FINAL SHOOTING OF PROJECTS AND AUDIENCE REACTIONS. Because final projects are more "polished," the last period often requires re-working on materials begun the previous session. Whenever possible, the final tapes are shown to the entire group and then to other classes. Recognition from other groups or from parents/ community is a "pay-off" for efforts. Tapes can be shown in the lunchroom or during school assemblies. Adults may want "to air" their tapes at meetings or at civic functions.

ESAA SPECIAL
ARTS PROJECT: VIDEO COMPONENT

MISSOURI STATE COUNCIL
ON THE ARTS

"COLUMBIA VIDEO COLLAGE"

1) Voelker's Variety Show -introduction	West Blvd. School
2) Blackula & Rodney	WEst-Blvd.
3) Safeway Interviews	Grant
4) 'I don't Know How' -undersea adventure	West Blvd.
5) 'What's your Favorite Word' -interviews	West Blvd.
6) 'Dinosaur Mike' -interview	Ridgeway
7) 'Cousin Sue' -a domestic drama	Grant
8) 'The Now Show' (excerpts)	
a) cereal commercial	
b) Blackula interview	
c) Elvis Presley	Benton
9) Wrap Up & Good Bye	Benton

Total: approx 25 Min.

This tape may be borrowed for use in schools, libraries, and museums. It can be played on one-half inch video equipment. Please contact the Missouri State Council on the Arts.

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Video Artists

Leroy Bryant
Eric Von Schrader

Editor
Dr. Mary Catherine McKee

ESAA-State Project Director

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MISSOURI STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

ESAA--Special Arts Project

Creativity with Focus

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An interpretation of the project is in order from two sources: leaders of MSCA staff and State Project Director. However, the granting agency requested evaluation only from the latter and so this director will describe it as she saw it. The business practice of "Management by Goals" guided the operations of the Project. Always two objectives were the focus of activities: 1) improvement of the child's self-concept; 2) increased contact between the artists and racial and ethnic groups of students, their parents, and teachers.

Our approach was designed to be innovative. The famed Yale psychologist Kenneth Keniston, for example, complains that traditional education puts too much emphasis upon "the child as a brain," and focuses too narrowly on a few learning areas. Because the school provides but one type of environment-- with specific kinds of atmosphere-- individualistic, oriented toward cognitive achievement, imposing dependency on and withholding authority and responsibility from children, the ESAA Special Arts Project provided enrichment in the affective and psychomotor domains. Realizing that one cannot change emotion directly, the ESAA project focused in depth on behavioral changes that resulted from enhancement of self concept.

Today increasing number of students fail to gain a successful identity and they react illogically and emotionally to their failure. Because they are lonely, they need involvement with school adults who are warm and personal and who will work with their behavior in

the present. The role of the artist in teaching children self-worth, in giving them the knowledge and tools necessary to succeed in our society, concerned all of us who guided the program. The artists stressed cooperation, understanding and practical attainment without the competitive report-card rewards of traditional study. Through the various art components, students were given an opportunity to control their own personalities and to mold themselves into a working crew, circumstances that gave scope for both character development and emotional exploration. Because self-doubt, cynicism and apathy are real dangers in young students, the artists in our program brought a strong stance based on artistic experience, emotion, and heart.

The project books (forwarded under separate cover) testify to the successful development of each art component. For all of us concerned with the project, these books evidence a magnificent achievement of our goals. They are the results of the artists' interactions with students, teachers, and community. They express concretely a warm personal achievement in group dynamics.

The writer would like, also, to give a qualitative report on the following concerns associated with the project: evaluation, budget, cooperation between teachers and artist, publicity, workshops, LEA co-ordinators, and state advisory commission.

EVALUATION

When students are involved with responsible people (artists) who themselves have a success identity and can fulfill their needs, the students are then in a position to fulfill their own needs. The artists in our program were of this calibre and the class reactions (with only one or two exceptions) demonstrated artist-student involvement which was real, warm, and positive. The artists stood as an

example of responsible involvement so that members of the class could learn to become involved with one another and begin to function as a working, problem-solving group. Involvement, vital to success, existed to a strong degree in the program.

The writer respected highly the assistance and association with the Center for Educational Improvement, University of Missouri, Columbia. Our contact man, Dr. Edward Ciaglia, works with these schools on a year-round basis and he personally monitored our program. For first semester activities, teacher questionnaires were administered and interpreted. During the second semester, the Center conducted a quantitative analysis of the project. (See attached evaluation results.) Statistical proof which they found is not conclusive that the children's attitude in racial bias changed, but the psychometrist, Mr. Crowson, in his research with the children, feels that there is some validity for stronger racial bias in traditional-type schools as against a lesser bias in children enrolled in IGE (Independently Guided Education) schools. A rather interesting sideline to his findings is that the younger the child, the more biased he/she is. The Center will use these findings as a basis for further research.

Evaluation for University City are employees in aesthetic education at CEMREL. Their year-round monitoring of the artistic components in University City school district provides a realistic, comprehensive, qualitative evaluation which attests to successful achievement of the goals. (Evaluation will follow in two weeks.)

BUDGET

The budget worked out as realistic, adequate, and well-planned. When members of the MSCA staff calculated the figures last spring, they

checked projected costs with commercial companies. However, for the best advantage of the program, this writer choose to make two exceptions: 1) hire school district presses to produce booklets at one-third commercial costs; 2) in lease/purchase of equipment, to rent it from the artists themselves at one-third commercial prices. Thus artists had more incentive to teach children to handle equipment with care and concern. Since there were no damages or loss of equipment, the insurance liability money was not needed. Because of these adjustments, there appears to be a surplus of $3,377.10 returned to granting agency.

Because Columbia did not assume its fiscal responsibility in the project, the MSCA office took it over. The result was a "round-robin" chain effect: Invoices from Columbia; Stage Project Director's signature for approval; warrant requests typed to accompany invoices; Jefferson City fiscal office to process invoices; checks mailed to MSCA office; remailing of check to individuals/companies with return form to MSCA upon receipt of check. To further complicate matters, Jefferson City reorganized their fiscal programs with state offices during the first semester, with the result that ESAA personnel were not paid until Christmas for work performed in September. This writer understands now why the granting agency desires each school district to assume fiscal and technical responsibility for its project.

COOPERATION BETWEEN TEACHER AND ARTIST

This was a sensitive area in the program. This writer, as well as the MSCA staff, endeavored, through art-orientation for teachers, and education-orientation for artists, to achieve teacher-artist involvement that was sincere, warm, and positive. Although we had to

be alert constantly to problems which might arise, success resulted. Except in one or two instances, teachers seemed more appreciative of the regular artists than they were of the visiting artists. (Puppetry and the Charlie Parker Memorial music group were exceptions.) When the artists were in direct contact with the students--rather than being crowded together in gym or auditorium--better teacher-artist-student rapport resulted.

PUBLICITY

News releases were sent out periodically to St. Louis and Columbia newspapers. A reasonable response resulted from the publicity on the grant announcements in the print media. Delighted students' reaction was covered at the expiration of the program in May. Television stations produced from two-minute to fifteen minute announcements about the Project. LEA coordinators were asked to speak on radio programs. Publicity in both print and media was positive and approving.

WORKSHOPS

In compliance with proposal specifications, the artists regularly conducted workshops. In Columbia there was an average attendance of fifteen adults--teachers and parents--with a low percentage of minority peoples, in spite of the fact that the writer regularly contacted leaders in art societies, parent-teacher organizations, and civic groups in order to encourage higher workshop attendance among minority peoples. The following rationalizations may be given: 1) ninety per cent of mothers in these schools work outside home; 2) time of workshops was immediately after school hours; 3) after the workshops, artists had to commute to either St. Louis or Kansas City;

consequently there were no evening workshops; 4) because of new curriculum techniques in IGE (Independently Guided Education) schools, teachers were involved after school hours. In University City there was a higher attendance record because of evening sessions. Artists-in-residence would have improved this facet of the project in that the artists could become more involved with the community.

LEA COORDINATORS

In Columbia, Mr. Kent Toalson proved a reliable leader and LEA Coordinator. As chairman of the Fine Arts Division in the Columbia School system, he was familiar with the performing arts as well as with the school personnel in ESAA eligible schools. Although he could devote only a small portion of his time to the project, his wisdom, prudence, and artistic expertise were greatly appreciated. It was a privilege to work with him.

In University City, Ms. Rose Banks was competent, cooperative, and sensitive to the accomplishments as well as to the problems of the program. Her prudence and willingness produced positive results with one or two exceptions. She cooperated well with the writer and with the MSCA staff.

State Advisory Committee Meetings

When the program began, the writer had some qualms about lack of significient progress to report monthly. These fears were unfounded. As the program evolved, the interest of the members grew and the success of the program was enhanced greatly by their vast wealth of experiences and diverse suggestions. The interaction of minority and non-minority members yielded a wealth of insights. The open

dialogue on all diverse questions was inspiring. One minority member especially wished his reaction to go on record. At first he had some misgivings about the program helping minority children, but at its close he expressed great admiration for the fine opportunities given both minority and non-minority students.

CONCLUSION

All facets of the project interested the writer, but the highlight of the whole program for her was the time spent in the schools establishing contact between artists, teachers, principals and,most importantly, the students. The program had success because of the MSCA staff's concern with high quality artists and this writer's concern that the artists interrelate successfully with students, teachers, and community. The writer's only regret is that she could not have accomplished more. Sincere gratitude is due: Mrs. Emily Rice, whose managerial wisdom helped to solve many questions; Mrs. Lottie Wright, whose patience with the thorny fiscal problems brought solutions; to other members of the MSCA staff whose knowledge and expertise contributed greatly; to the ESAA secretary/bookkeeper for her loyalty and dedication; to the State Advisory members for their faithful attendance, helpful suggestions, and moral support; and finally to our program officer, Ms. Donna Gold, for her insightfulness, artistic acumen, and helpfulness and to the granting agency for budget allotment to finance the project.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. M.C. McKee

Dr. M. C. McKee
State Project Director